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SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN (PERRY)

SENSITIVE

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: RFE/RL REPORTER IN BALKAN PROVINCE SAFE

Ref: Ashgabat 272

¶1. (SBU) Balkan Welayat RFE/RL stringer Shamytrat Akoyliyev visited the embassy on March 15. He stopped by in response to PolAsst's March 10 call to his family, following up on reports that RFE/RL correspondents were being detained (reftel). Akoyliyev told PolOff that he was safe and had not been called in by security or police officers. His land line was disconnected on December 31, 2005, "due to cable damage," according to the local telecommunications provider. Though the outage was not widespread, Akoyliyev noted that phone service to several of his neighbors was cut off reportedly for the same reason. He is not sure if the disconnection is related to his reporting for RFE/RL or for the official reason.

¶2. (SBU) After the disconnection, Akoyliyev visited local MNB and police officers, but they did not have any new problem with him. Following his earlier report about flour shortages in the region, Akoyliyev was told by the Gumdag City Hakim (mayor) that he shouldn't report for RFE/RL. "Other than that, nobody told me anything," Akoyliyev stated.

¶3. (SBU) "Due to the phone outage, I haven't been able to report to Prague for a long time. Perhaps that is why they worried that I might have been detained." Akoyliyev applied for a cell phone account with a private company, which he was told should be available around April 11. Meanwhile, Akoyliyev is searching for alternative ways to report to Prague. He is planning to report in from a public telephone, which he says is quite expensive. "My relatives don't want me to use their phone line for reporting to RFE/RL fearing that their lines also will be cut off," Akoyliyev explained. Nevertheless, he was very grateful for our concern for his well-being and promised to keep in closer contact in the future.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: The concern over Akoyliyev's possible detention happily proved to be unwarranted. Nevertheless, the precedent of all RFE/FL reporters throughout the country losing phone service is troubling. Especially following the detention of the two reporters in Mary, we will continue to closely follow the situation. End Comment.

JACOBSON